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ABSTRACT

U.S. educators recognize that the study of history is a vital part of a child's overall education and that parents are in the best position to encourage their children's natural interest in history. This booklet is designed as a tool for parents to use in stimulating their children's active involvement in learning about history. The booklet includes: basic information about history, and approaches for parents to use when enjoying history with their children, aged 4-11; history activities that parents and their children can do--at home, in their community, and out of town--for no or little cost; and history resources in parents' communities and nationally in bookstores and libraries. (DB)

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May 1993

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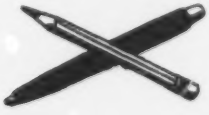

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Helping Your Child Learn History

with activities for children aged 4 through 11

By Elaine Wrisley Reed
Edited by Jacquelyn Zimmermann
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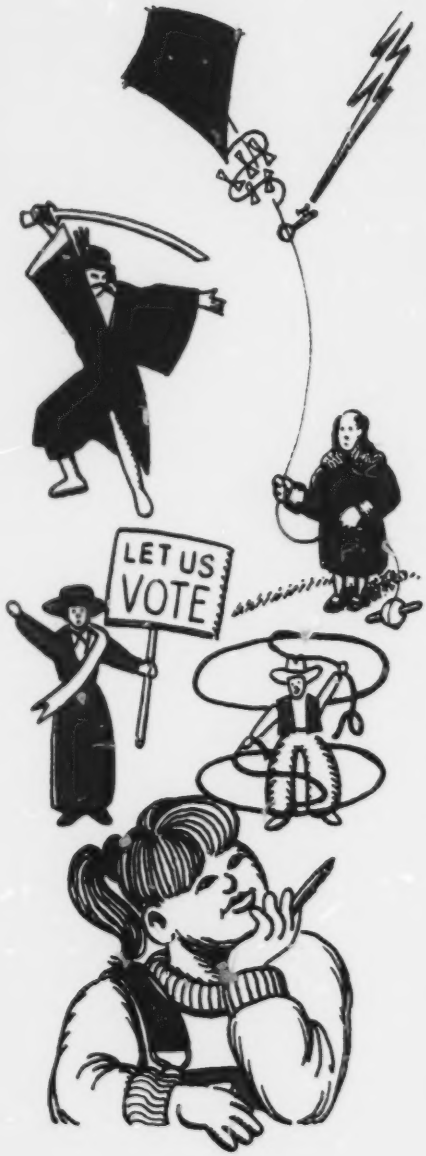
Introduction



Imagine waking up one morning to find out that you have no memory! You are not able to remember who you are or what happened in your life, yesterday or the day before that. You are unable to tell your children from total strangers, you cannot communicate with people because you no longer know how to greet them, or understand their conversation. You don't remember what "the election," "war," or "the movies" mean.

Lack of *historical* memory is parallel to this loss of individual memory. The link on which we depend every day between the past and present would be lost if we had no memory of our history. And we would miss a great source of enjoyment that comes from piecing together the story of our past.

Today American educators are working to promote the study of history in the schools and at home. Knowledge of our history enables us to understand our nation's traditions, its conflicts, and its central ideas and values. Knowledge of world history enables us to understand other cultures.

We hope to encourage children to love history and to enjoy learning about it. This booklet is a tool you can use to stimulate your children's active involvement in the history that surrounds them every day. It includes:

- Basic information about history, and approaches to enjoying history with your children, **aged 4-11**;
- History activities that you and your children can do—at home, in your community, and out of town—for no or little cost; and
- History resources in your community and nationally, in bookstores, and libraries.

History Education Begins at Home

Children and History

As parents we are in the best position to encourage our children's natural interest in history. It is to us they address their first historical questions: *"Where did I come from?"* and *"Was I always here?"* These two questions contain the two main meanings of "*history*": it is the *story* of people and events, and it is the record of times *past*.

Now is the time to bring out the historical evidence and to share family stories with your child. Birth and adoption certificates, immunization records, first pieces of your child's writing and art, as well as photographs all count as historical sources that tell the story of your child.

The stories you tell and read to your children, or make up with them, are part of their cultural heritage and reinforce the two basic parts of history: *"Once upon a time, and long ago."*

Parents Make a Difference

Your child is born into history. She has no memory of it, yet she finds herself in the middle of a story that began before she became one of its characters. She also wants to have a place in it.

As parents we can prepare our children to achieve the lifelong task of finding their place in history by helping them to learn what shaped the world into which they were born. Without information about their history, children don't "get" a lot of what they hear and see around them.

Your attitude about history can also make a difference for your child. Showing your interest in history—your belief that knowing history makes a difference for your life—encourages your child's own interest.

Many parents say they love history. If you are one of them you can share your particular interests in history with your children as well as help them develop their own.

Many other parents say they find history boring. If you are among these, try one of the following: start writing your own life story; read the diary of Anne Frank, or the autobiography of Frederick Douglass; read the *Declaration of Independence*, or rent a video about the Civil War. As you rediscover history your children may be inspired by your interest.

History Is a Habit

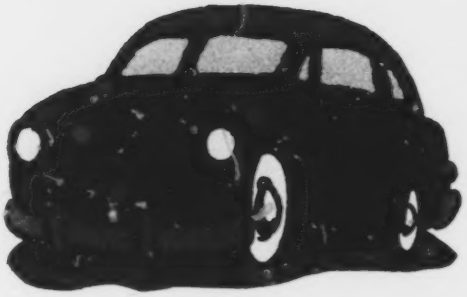
The activities in this book can help you start doing history with your child. You will probably get more ideas of your own. In addition, you can develop some of the following "history habits" that make history important not only during an activity but every day.

History Habits for Parents

Habits are activities we do on a regular basis. We **acquire** habits by choosing to make them a part of our life. It is worth the time and effort to develop good habits because they enhance our well-being. We suggest the following history habits to enrich your life experience and your children's.

Share family history with your children, particularly your memories. Help your own parents and other relatives know your children and talk with them about family stories.

Participate in your community by voting and helping to make changes in areas that interest you. Encourage your children to vote in school elections, to present themselves as candidates, and gain knowledge of history and the values and behaviors that are the basis of their citizenship.



Read newspapers and news magazines, and watch television news programs to maintain an informed judgment about the world. Talk about current events and your ideas about them with your children and other adults, and explore different points of view. Check the encyclopedia or your local library for additional historical information.

Watch television programs about important historical topics with your family, and encourage conversation about the program as you watch. Get library books on the same topic and learn more about it. Check to see if the books and television programs agree on significant issues, and discuss their differences.

Read with your children about people and events that have made a difference in the world, and discuss the readings together. The list of publications at the end of this book serves as a support to you for choosing materials.

Help children know that the makers of history are real people like themselves, who have ideas, work hard, and experience failure and success. Introduce them to local community leaders in person if possible, and national and world leaders via the media and biographies.

Make globes, maps, and encyclopedias available and use every opportunity to refer to them. A reference to Africa in a child's favorite story, or the red, white, and green stripes on a box of spaghetti can be opportunities to learn more about the world.

Have a collection of great speeches and written documents to read from time to time with your child.

Your own involvement in history, in any of the forms referred to in this book, is a good habit you can pass on to your children.

Enjoying Your Child and History

We have intentions of good fun as we plan any activity with our children. We also want them to learn something from most activities. They probably would say they want to have fun and learn something new too. But sometimes the difference in abilities between us and them, or the demands of time, end up leaving us disappointed. Keeping the following in mind can help keep your time together fun and productive:

You don't have to know all the facts or fully understand history to help your children learn. Your willingness to learn with them—to read, to ask questions, to search, and to make mistakes—is the most important gift you can bring to the process. By viewing their mistakes as sources of information for future efforts, your children gain confidence to continue learning.

Conversation gets you past the difficult moments. Keeping open the communication between you and your children, and encouraging continued discussion no matter how off the mark your children may seem, tells them you take them seriously and

value their efforts to learn. The ability to have a conversation with your children profoundly affects what and how they learn.

Children have their own ideas and interests. By letting them choose activities accordingly, you let them know their ideas and interests are valuable. Often they will want to teach you as a way to use what they know. Share their interests and encourage them to learn more.

Make the most of everyday opportunities to do history: visits from grandparents, reading books, telling stories, holidays, elections, symbols like the flag, the national anthem before sporting events, pictures in newspapers and magazines, visits to museums. If your child asks about a person in a painting, stop to find out who it is. Keep asking: "What does this mean? How do I know?"

Choose your activities well. The activities in this booklet are for children aged 4-11. Each of the activities can be adapted to a child of any age and ability level. Even a preschooler can "read" a newspaper with your help, for a short period of time. While an activity that is too difficult will frustrate your child, an activity that is too easy will lose his interest. Challenges bring feelings of accomplishment.

Have a goal. When you choose or begin an activity you may not have a clear idea of where it's going. But keep in mind that the purpose of doing the activities in this book is to learn something about history. The first section of this book, the introduction to each activity, and the question boxes can help you. As you complete each activity discuss with your child what you learned together. Making bread is one thing, knowing that bread has historical meaning is another. Achieving a goal for an activity also helps your child sense the pleasure of a completed project.

The Basics of History

The Meanings of History

If you look for the meaning of "history" in the dictionary you may be surprised to find that history is not simply the past itself. The first meaning of history is "tale, story," and the second meaning is "a chronological record of significant past events." The opening of tales for children—"Once upon a time"—captures both the story and time nature of history.

When we study history we are involved in a branch of knowledge that records and explains past events. Many would say that history is not just one branch of knowledge among others, but that it is the most essential one because it is the complete story of human endeavor. It happens that the word "history" comes from the Greek "to know."

The activities in this book are organized according to the two meanings of history as story and time in order to help you explore these meanings with your child.

The Story in History

The **work** of doing history is to consider people and events that are no longer in our presence. Unlike doing science, we do history without being able to observe behavior and its results.

This work is **fun** when we make the past meaningful. We do this by weaving together various pieces of information about the past. In doing this we create a pattern that gives shape to "just a bunch of facts." Doing history is a way of bringing the past to life, in the best tradition of the storyteller.

But not just any story will do. While there are many possible tales of the same event, good history is based on evidence and several perspectives.

The history with which we are most familiar is political history—the story of wars, peace treaties, and changes of government. But anything that has a past has a history. This includes the history of ideas, for example the concept of freedom, and cultural history, for example the history of music.

The story of history is interesting to us because it tells us about real people who had ideas and beliefs, worked and struggled to put them in action, and shaped the present in which we find ourselves.

Time in History

Human events take place in time, one after the other. It is important to learn the sequence of events in order to trace them, reconstruct them, and weave the stories that tell of their connections. Children need to learn the measures of time, such as year, decade, generation, and century. When they hear "Once upon a time in history" they need to be able to ask "When did that happen?," and to know how to find the answer.

Time in history is a kind of relationship. We can look at several events that all happened at the same time, and that together tell a story about that period. Or we can look at the development of an idea over time, and learn how and why it changed. And we can consider the relationship between the past and the present, or the future and the past (which is today!). The present is the result of choices that people made and the beliefs they held in the past, while the past, in being retold, is in some way remade in the present. The future will be the result of the coming together of several areas developing today.

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The main focus of history is the relationship between continuity and change, and it is important that our children understand the difference between them. For example, the population of the United States has changed dramatically over time with each wave of immigration. With the entry of these new groups into American society, bringing their own ideas, beliefs, and cultures, American democracy has continued and grown stronger. It continues to function according to its original purpose of safeguarding our basic values of freedom and equality, even as the meanings and effects of these values change.

A New Look at History

History is now understood to be more than memorizing names and dates. While being able to recall the details of great people and events is important, the enjoyment of history is enhanced by engaging in activities and experiencing history as a "story well told."

Original sources and literature are real experiences. Reading the actual words that changed the course of history, and stories that focus on the details of time and place help children know that history is about *real* people in real places who made real choices that had some real consequences, and that they could have made different choices.

Less can mean more. "A well-formed mind is better than a well-stuffed mind," says an old proverb. Trying to learn the entire history of the world is not only impossible, it feels too hard and reduces our enthusiasm for history. In-depth study of a few important events gives us a chance to understand the many sides of a story. We can always add new facts.

History is hands-on work. Learning history is best done in the same way we learn to use a new language, or to play basketball: we *do it* as well as read about it.

Doing history means asking questions about historical events and characters; searching our towns for signs of its history; talking with others about current events and issues; writing our own stories about the past.

There is no final word on history. There are good storytellers and less good storytellers. And there are many stories. But very rarely does any one storyteller "get it right," or one story say it all. A good student of history will always look for other points of view, knowing that our understanding of history changes over time.

Your children do well to ask "So what?" Much that we take for granted is not so obvious to our children. We should invite them to clear up doubts they have about the reasons for remembering certain things, getting facts right, and collecting and judging evidence. At each step, asking "so what?" helps to explain what is important and worth knowing, and to take the next step with confidence.

Asking Questions

At the end of each activity in this book, you will find a series of questions that can help develop the critical thinking skills children need to participate well in society, learn history, and learn from history. The questions help them know the difference between what is real, fantasy, and ideal, and make the activity more fun.

Critical thinking is judging the value of historical evidence; judging claims about what is true or good; deciding what information is important to have; looking at a topic from different points of view; being curious enough to look further into an event or topic; being skeptical enough to look for more than one account of an event or life; and being aware that our vision and thinking are often limited by our biases and opinions.

The following two sections contain a sampling of history activities, organized by the meanings of history as story and time. Each group of activities is preceded by a review of three elements of story and time from the perspective of history. The review is meant to inform and support conversation between you and your child, which is the most important step in each activity by far.

Activities: History as Story

Records

History is a permanent **written** record of the past. Because recording history is an essential part of doing history, a "history log" is indicated for each activity. More recently, history is also recorded on **audio** and **video** tape, and many of the activities lend themselves to this type of recording as well. Your children may be interested to know that the time of their favorite dinosaurs is called "prehistory" because it is **unrecorded** history. They should also know that some written languages have been invented because telling stories orally, without recording them in some form, is not by itself a sure enough way to preserve the identity of a people.

Narration

George Washington, in his *Farewell Address* in 1796, said: "Though in reviewing the incidents of my administration I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors." This reflection is a good reminder that history, with its facts and evidence, is also an **interpretation** of the

past. There is more than one cause for an event, more than one kind of outcome, and more than one way of looking at their relationship.

Evidence

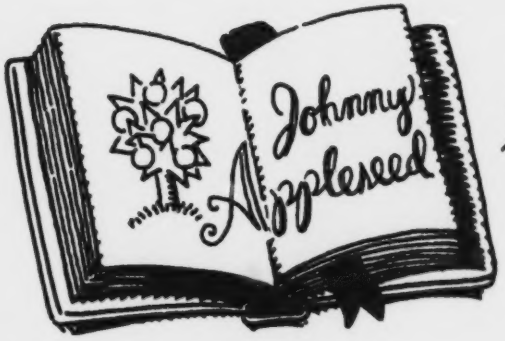
All good histories are written on the basis of evidence. Your children need to learn the importance of evidence, and to distinguish it from biases, propaganda, stereotypes, and opinion. They need to judge whether the many stories about John F. Kennedy or World War I, for example, are based on solid enough evidence to provide an accurate account of the life and times.

What's the Story?

History is a story well told. Through storytelling children can understand what's involved in writing the stories that make history.

What you'll need

Family members and friends
A fairy tale or folk tale
History log



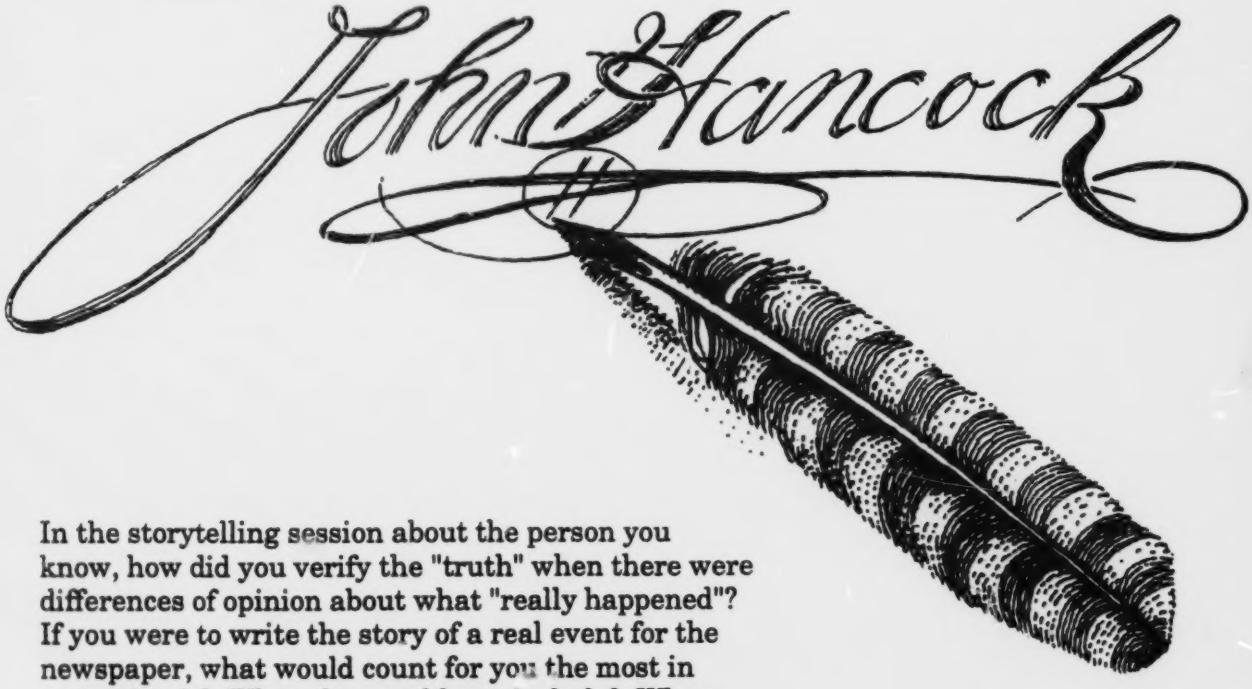
What to do

1. **Tell a story of a person you know**. Gather your children, other family members, and friends to have a storytelling session. Choose a person you know about whom the group will tell the story. Decide who will begin, and go clockwise from there with each person adding to the story. Set a time limit so that you must end the story somewhere.

2. **Read a folk story or fairy tale,** for example, *Little Red Riding Hood* or *The Story of Johnny Appleseed*. Talk about how the story begins and ends, who the characters are and what they feel, and what happens. Ask how this story based on fantasy is different from the story you told about the real person you know.

3. **Read a story about an historical event.** Now pick a moment in world history, for example the fall of the Berlin Wall, the French and Indian War, or a current event in the news headlines. Ask the librarian for help in choosing material that is at your child's reading level.

4. Help your child write in the history log about this storytelling experience.



In the storytelling session about the person you know, how did you verify the "truth" when there were differences of opinion about what "really happened"? If you were to write the story of a real event for the newspaper, what would count for you the most in preparing it? What else would you include? Where would you get your information? How would you check the accuracy of the information?

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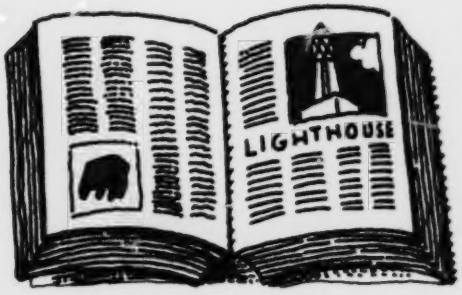


Our Town

Your phone book, newspaper, and other resources can serve as your best guide to history in your town. Not only does referring to them save time, it teaches how to use tools to get information.

What you'll need

Phone books, both yellow and white pages
Daily city newspaper
Community newspaper
History log

What to do

1. **Newspaper search.** Look in your city and community newspapers. They list "things to do." Look for parades, museum and art exhibits, music events, children's theater, history talks and walks.

   Participate in an event and help your child write about it in the history log when you get back home.

   For more help, call education services at your city newspaper. Ask about their education programs that use newspapers.

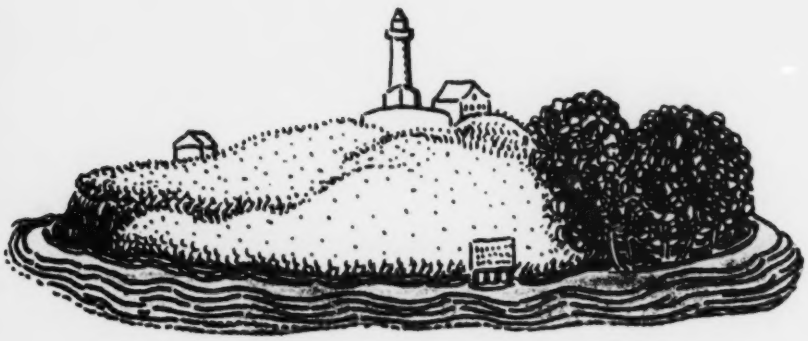
2. **Phone book search.** Look in your phone books under "History" or "Historical Places." You will find a few places under this heading but many more are listed elsewhere.

   Brainstorm with your children about what other words to look under in the phone book to find local history.

Call the places you find. Ask about their programs, hours, and upcoming special events. Ask to be put on their mailing list. Also ask where else you should go to learn about your town's history.

Your younger children should listen to your phone conversation. They learn how to ask for information by listening to you.

3. Begin a list in the history log of local historical sites. Include phone numbers, addresses, hours of operation, and other useful information for future visits.



What is the most surprising thing you learned about your town? If you were asked to be a tour guide for visitors to your town, what would you show them? If you went to another town, how would you go about visiting it?

History on the Go

Visit the historical places in your child's history book, either in person or by collecting materials.

What you'll need

Your child's history book
Maps, guidebooks
History log

What to do

1. Find out what historical events your child is studying in school. Perhaps a historical site is near your town. Choose a site of one of these events to visit in person or through the materials you collected.

2. Prepare the trip together in advance. Ask the librarian to help you and your child find books and videos on the history of the town or the historical figures who lived there.

3. Call the Chamber of Commerce of the area for maps and guidebooks.

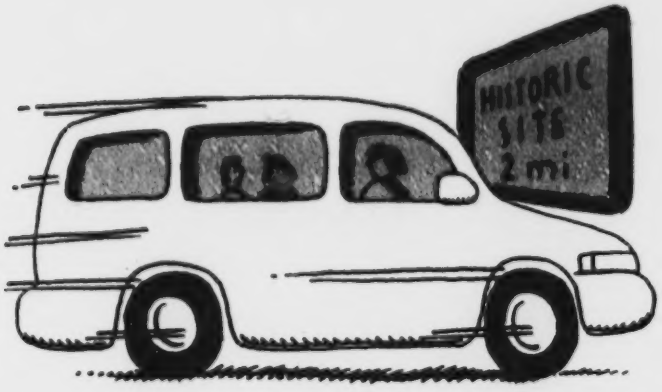
4. Make a list. Think of some questions you want answered on your trip.

5. Talk about the place you are visiting.

6. Have your child write about the trip in the history log. Include answers to the questions that were answered that day.

7. Have your children make up a quiz for *parents*, or a game, based on the trip.

8. Encourage your child to read more stories about the place you visited and the people who were part of its history, and historical documents that are associated with the site. For example, in visiting Akron, Ohio, the site of the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851, you might read Sojourner Truth's address, known also as *And Ain't I a Woman?*



What was *historical* about the place you visited? What kinds of things communicated the history of the place? When you returned, did you see your town in a new way, or notice something you hadn't seen before?

What's News?

What's new today really began in the past. Discussing the news is a way to help your child gain a historical perspective on the events of the present.

What you'll need

Daily or Sunday newspaper
Weekly news magazine
A daily national news program
Highlighter
History log

What to do

1. Decide on how often you will do this activity with your children—current events happen every day. This activity can be most useful to younger children if it is done from time to time to get them used to the idea of "news." Older children benefit from doing it more often, at least once a week if possible.

2. Look through the newspaper or news magazine with your child. Ask him to decide what pictures or headlines are related to history. Highlight these references. Some examples are the Yalta Treaty, the French Revolution, Lenin, Pearl Harbor, or Brown v. Board of Education.

3. Together read the articles you have chosen. Write down any references to events that did not happen today or yesterday, or to people who were not alive recently.

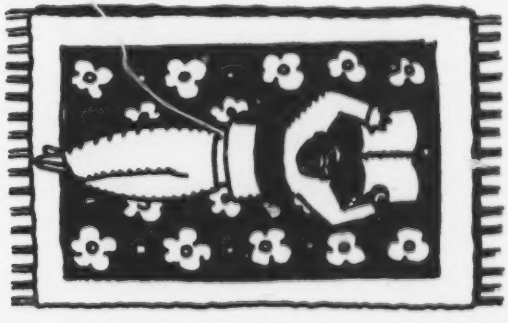
4. Have a conversation with your child about what these past events and people have to do with what's happening today. Help your child write in the history log the connections you find between past and present.

5. Watch the evening news or a morning news program together. Write down as many references as possible to past history and discuss the links you find between these references and the news story you heard.

6. During another viewing, help your child focus on how the information was communicated: did the newscaster use interviews, books, historical records, written historical accounts, literature, paintings, photographs?

7. Help your child compare several accounts of a major news story from different news shows, newspapers, and news magazines.

"There is nothing new under the sun," according to an old saying. Did you find anything "new" in the news? What "same old stories" did you find?



History Lives

At living history museums you can see real people doing the work of blacksmiths, tin workers, shoemakers, farmers, and others. Children can see how things work, and can ask questions of the "characters."

What you'll need

Visitor brochure and museum map
Sketch pad and pencils, or camera
History log

What to do

1. Awaken your children's expectations of what they will see and what to look for. Write or call the museum ahead of time to obtain information brochures and a map. Living history museums are located in Williamsburg, VA and Old Sturbridge Village, MA, among other places.

2. Plan how to actually "visit history." Pretend to be a family living in the historical place. What would it be like to be a family living in the place you choose to go?

3. When you visit the museum, ask your child what his favorite object or activity is, and why.

4. Help your children sketch something in the museum, and put it in the history log. Tell your children that this is the way history was visually recorded before there were cameras.

5. Use your camera, if you have one, to make a "modern day" record of history, and create a scrapbook with the photographs of what you saw.

6. When you get home, talk about what it would have been like to live in that historical place in that period of time. Compare this to the image you had before your visit.

How were days spent in the period of time you experienced? What kind of dress was common, or special? What kinds of food did people usually eat, and did they eat alone or in groups? What kind of work would you have chosen to do as an adult? If a living history museum were made of the late 20th century, what would people see and learn there? **Reminder**: if you can't visit a museum, travel by reading books.

Cooking Up History

Every culture has its version of bread. "Eating it, one feels that the taste one cannot quite put to words may almost be the taste of history."* Children enjoy making this American Indian fried bread.

What you'll need

2 1/2 cups all-purpose or wheat flour
1 1/2 tablespoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon dried skimmed milk powder
3/4 cup warm water
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
Oil for frying

Mixing bowls and spoons, spatula
Large skillet
Cloth towels
Baking sheet
Paper towels

History log

What to do

1. In a large bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder, and salt.

2. In a small bowl, stir together the dried milk, water, and vegetable oil.

3. Pour this liquid over the dry ingredients and stir until the dough is smooth (1 or 2 minutes). Add 1 tablespoon of flour if the dough is too soft.

4. Knead the dough in the bowl with your hands about 30 seconds. Cover it with a cloth and let it sit 10 minutes.

5. Line the baking sheet with paper towels to receive the finished loaves.

*From Edward Behr (see Acknowledgments).

6. Divide the dough into eight sections. Take one section and keep the rest covered in the bowl.

7. Roll the dough into a ball and flatten with your hand. Then roll it into a very thin circle 8 to 10 inches across. The thinner the dough, the puffier the bread will be.

8. Cover this circle with a cloth.

9. Continue with the other seven sections of dough in the same way.

10. In the large frying pan or skillet, pour vegetable oil to about 1 inch deep.

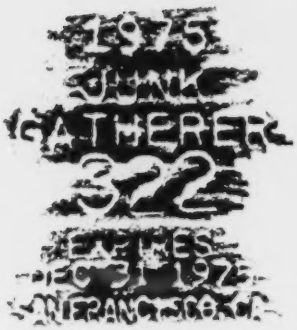
11. As you begin to roll the last piece of dough, turn on the heat under the skillet. When the oil is hot, slip in a circle of dough. Fry for about 1 minute or until the bottom is golden brown. **Reminder**: Parental supervision is necessary at all times around a hot stove.

12. Turn the dough over with tongs or a spatula. Fry the other side for 1 minute.

13. Put the fried bread on the baking sheet and continue with the other rounds of dough.

14. Eat your fried bread while it is hot and crisp. Put honey on it if you like. Write in your history log what you learned about this bread and others you have tried.

How is this bread different from other breads you have tried? Think of common expressions that use the word "bread." For example, "the nation's breadbasket"; "I earn my bread and butter"; or "breadlines of the 1920s." What does "bread" mean in each of these? What place does bread have in *your* daily life and in other cultures?



Rub Against History

Younger children find rubbings great fun. Cornerstones and plaques are interesting, and even coins will do.

What you'll need

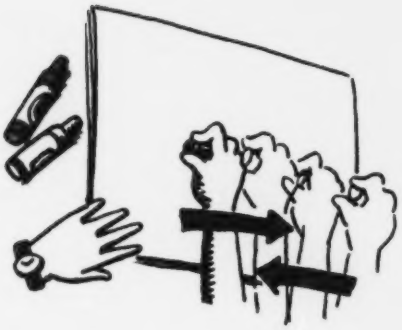
Tracing paper or other light weight paper
Large crayons with the paper removed, fat lead pencil, colored pencils, or artist's charcoal
History log

What to do

1. Help your child make a kit to do rubbings. It could include the items listed. The paper should not tear easily but it should also be light enough so that the details of what is traced become visible.

2. Have children make a rubbing of a quarter or half dollar. Make the coin stable by supporting it with tape. Double the tape so that it sticks on both sides and place it on the bottom of the coin. Lay the paper on top of the coin, and rub across it with a pencil, crayon, or charcoal. Don't rub too hard. Rub until the coin's marks show up.

3. Go outside to do a rubbing. Look for
   - Dates imprinted in cement sidewalks
   - Cornerstones and plaques on buildings
   - Decorative ironwork on buildings and lampposts
   - Art and lettering on monuments and around doorways



4. Your child can ask family members to guess what each rubbing is.

5. Have the children tell about each rubbing. Tell them to look for designs and dates among the rubbings.

6. Children may want to cut some of their rubbings out to include in their history logs. Or they can fit several on one piece of paper to show a pattern of dates and designs.

What showed up in your rubbings? What did the date and designs commemorate? Historical preservation groups in America have worked to preserve old buildings and to install plaques on public historical places. Is this interesting or important work? Why have humans left their marks on the world from early cave drawings to today's Vietnam Veterans' Memorial?

Activities: History as Time

Chronology

While our children need the opportunity to study events in depth to get an understanding of them, they also need to know the **sequence** of historical events in time, and the names and places associated with them. Being able to place events in time, your child is better able to learn the **relationships** among them. What came first? What was cause, and what was effect? Without a sense of chronological order, events seem like a big jumble, and we can't understand what happened in the past. It matters, for example, that our children know that the American and French Revolutions are related.

Empathy

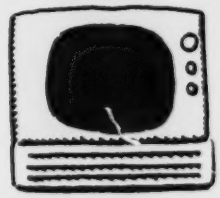
Empathy is the ability to put ourselves in the place of another person and time. Since history is the reconstruction of the past, we must have an idea of what it was like **"to be there"** in order to reconstruct it with some accuracy. For example, in studying the westward expansion your children may ask why people didn't fly across the country to avoid the hazards of exposure on stagecoach trails. When you answer that the airplane hadn't yet been invented, they may ask why not. They need an understanding of how technology develops and its state at the time. Using original source documents, such as diaries, logs, and speeches, helps us guard against imposing the present on the past, and allows us to see events through the eyes of people who were there.

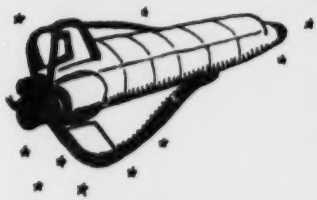
Context

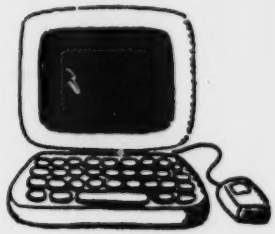
Context is related to empathy. Context means "weave together" and refers to the set of circumstances in several areas that framed an event. To understand any historical period or event our children should know **how to weave** together politics (how a society was ruled), sociology (what groups formed the society), economics (how people worked and what they produced), and religion, literature, the arts, and philosophy (what was valued and believed at the time). When they try to understand World War II, for example, they will uncover a complex set of events. And they will find that these events draw their meaning from their context.

History means having a grand old time with new stories. So, think about the relationship between history and time as you do the following activities.

Postwar technology







G.I. Bill

Compact disc

Marshall Plan

Fall of the Berlin Wall

Time Marches On

The stories of history have beginnings, middles, and ends that show events, and suggest causes and effects. A personal timeline helps your child picture these elements of story.

What you'll need

Paper for timeline
Colored pencils
Crayons
Shelf paper or computer paper
Removable tape
History log (optional)

What to do

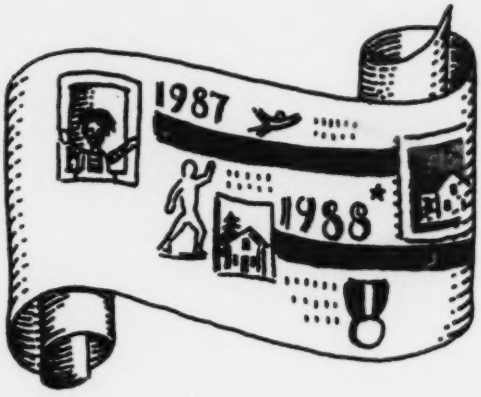
1. Draw on a piece of paper, or in the history log, a vertical line for the timeline. Mark this line in even intervals for each year of your child's life.

2. Help your child label the years with significant events, starting with your child's birthday.

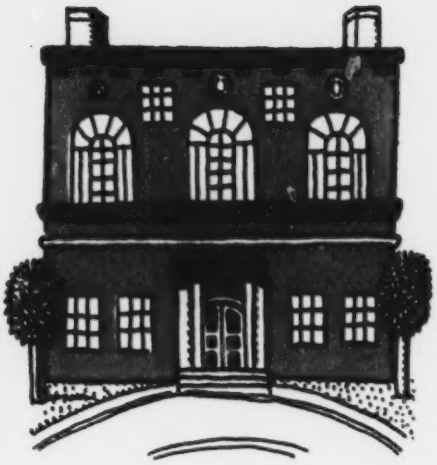
3. Review the timeline. Your child may want to erase and change an event for a particular year to include a more memorable or important one. (Historians also rethink their choices when they study history.)

4. For a timeline *poster*, use a long roll of shelf paper or computer paper. For a horizontal timeline, fasten it to the wall up high around the room using removable tape so that your child can take it down to add more events or drawings. For a vertical timeline, hang it next to the doorway in your child's room. Start with the birthday at the bottom. Your child can begin writing down events and add to it later.

5. For older children, have them do a timeline of what was happening in the world at the same time as each event of their life. To begin, they can use the library's collection of newspapers to find and record the headlines for each of their birthdays.



What is the most significant event on the timeline? What effects did the event have on your child's life? What are the connections between the events in your child's life and world events at the time?



Weave a Web

A history web is a way of connecting people and events. Is there an old ball field in your town you've always wondered about? Or did you ever wonder why there are so many war memorials in your town? Then you need to do a history web!

What you'll need

Large piece of paper or poster board (at least 3 1/2 x 2 1/2 ft.)
Colored pencils or markers
History log

What to do

1. Pick a place in your community that has always seemed mysterious to you—an old ball field, general or hardware store, house, or schoolhouse.

   Or ask yourself: "What are there lots of in my town?" Churches, fountains? Pick one of these historical "families."

2. Go to one of these places. Jot down in your history log what you see and hear there. For example, look for marks on the buildings, such as dates and designs, or parts of the buildings, such as bleachers or bell towers.

3. Find out other information about the place by asking a librarian for resources, or by searching the archives of your local newspaper. Look for major events that took place there, such as the setting of a world record or the visit of a famous person. Also look for other events that changed the place, such as modernization or dedications.

4. Find people who have lived in your town a long time. Interview them using questions about these major and related events, and any others they remember.

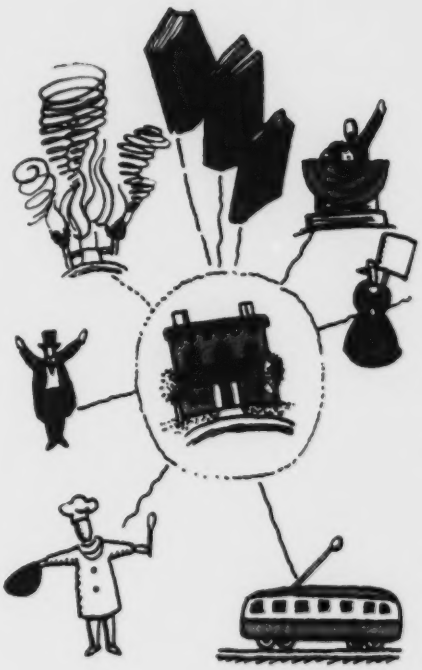
5. Draw a web, with the name of the place you studied in the middle (like the spider who weaves a "home").

6. Draw several strands from the middle to show the major events in the life of the place.

7. Connect the strands with cross lines to show other related events.

8. When the web is complete consider the relationships among the strands. (See parent box.)

9. Ask the editor of your local newspaper to publish your web. Ask readers to contribute more information to add to it. This is exactly how history is written!



When was the place you picked built? If you picked a "family" of places, when was each place built? If they were built around the same time, what similarities and differences do you notice about their features, such as style and what they commemorate? How is the place you picked connected to other events in history?

Put Time in a Bottle

Collecting things from one's lifetime and putting them in a time capsule is a history lesson that will never be forgotten.

What you'll need

Magazines or newspapers with pictures
Sealable container
Tape or other sealant
History log

Lift up your eyes upon
This day breaking for you.
Give birth again
To the dream.

Women, children, men,
Take it into the palms of your hands,
Mold it into the shape of your most
Private need. Sculpt it into
The image of your most public self.
Lift up your hearts. . .

Excerpted from "On the Pulse of Morning", delivered by Maya Angelou at the 1993 Presidential Inauguration.

What to do

1. Have your children collect *pictures* of a few important things from their life to date.

2. Tell your children that the items will be put in a time capsule so that when future generations find it they can learn something about your children and their time.

   Some things to collect that represent the life and times of a period are games and toys, new technology, means of transportation, slang, movies, presidential campaign memorabilia, great speeches, poetry and fiction, music, heroes, advertising, events, television shows, fashions, and accounts of issues and crises.

   Also have them include a letter describing life today to the person who opens the time capsule.

3. Meet together for a "show and tell" of the items.

4. Once everyone is satisfied with the collection, label the items by name and with any other information that will help those who find them understand how they are significant to the history of our time.

5. Place the items in a container, seal the container, and find a place to store it.

6. Write in the history log a short description of the time period and record the location of the time capsule.

What did the collection of items tell about the period? Did the items tend to be of a certain type?

Quill Pens & Berry Ink

Knowing how to write has been a valued skill throughout history. History itself depends on writing, and writing has changed over time from scratches on clay to computerized letters.

What you'll need

For **quill pen**:
feather, scissors,
a paper clip

For **berry ink**:
1/2 cup of ripe berries, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon vinegar, food strainer, bowl, wooden spoon, small jar with tight-fitting lid

Paper
Paper towel
History log

What to do

1. **Make the ink:** Collect some berries for your ink. Consider what color you want your ink to be, and what berries are available. Blueberries, cherries, blackberries, strawberries, or raspberries work well. Fill the strainer with berries and hold it over the bowl. Crush the berries against the strainer with the wooden spoon so that the berry juice drips into the bowl. When all the juice is out of the berries, throw the pulp away. Add the salt and vinegar to the berry juice and stir well. If the ink is too thick, add a teaspoon or two of water, but don't add too much or you'll lose the color. Store the ink in a small jar with a tight-fitting lid. Make only as much as you think you will use at one time, because it will dry up quickly.

2. **Make the pen:** Find a feather. Form the pen point by cutting the fat end of the quill on an angle, curving the cut slightly. A good pair of scissors is safer than a knife. Clean out the inside of the quill so that the ink will flow to the point. Use the end of a paper clip if needed. You may want to cut a center slit in the point; however, if you press too hard on the pen when you write, it may split.

3. **Write with the pen:** Dip just the tip of the pen in the ink, and keep a paper towel handy to use as an ink blotter. Experiment by drawing lines, curves, and single letters, and by holding the pen at different angles. Most people press too hard or stop too long in one spot.

4. Practice signing your name, John Hancock style, with the early American letters shown here. Then write your signature in your history log.

5. Write your name again using a pen or pencil. Compare the results.

Why do we write? When do people in your family use writing? What written things do you see every day? What is their purpose? What effect do different writing implements have on writing, for example quill pens, ballpoint pens, typewriters, and computers?

A B C D E F G

H I J K L M

N O P Q R S T

U V W X Y Z

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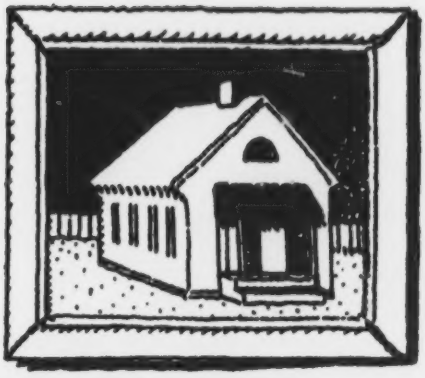

School Days

Did you ever wonder why there is no school in summer? Or why there might be soon?

What you'll need

Map of the United States
Crayons or colored pencils
History log

What to do

1. **Talk about what school was like when you were a child.** Include how schools looked physically (e.g., one-room schoolhouse or campus?); what equipment teachers used (e.g., chalk boards or computers?); what subjects you studied; what choices you faced (e.g., transportation to and from school, extracurricular activities); and favorite teachers.

2. **Talk about what school was like 50 or 100 years ago.** Ask your librarian for help in looking this up, and talk to older relatives.

   Include the history of work in America and how this affects schooling. For example, when America was an agricultural society, children were needed to help plant and harvest crops. It was common then that children didn't go to school every day, or in the summer.

Have children draw a variety of crops or animals raised in the United States, including those grown in their own state or neighborhood. They can draw either right on the map or on paper that they will cut and paste on the appropriate state. The map can be traced from an atlas in the library or from a geography book. Talk about when various crops are planted and harvested, and the effects of growing seasons on migrant worker families.

Talk about another change in work in America and how it affected schooling. For example, when America was becoming a manufacturing economy, during the Industrial Revolution, laws were made *against* child labor and *for* mandatory schooling.

Help your child talk about how the work of parents in America today affects schooling, for example, the need for afterschool programs.

3. **Imagine what school will be like in the future.** Younger children may want to use blocks to build their future school, and older children may want to draw theirs.

What has remained the same about school from the past to the present? What has changed? If you could be the head of a school 20 years from now, what would you keep and what would you change based on your current school? How would you go about making the change?

Time To Celebrate

On quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies is written the phrase "E pluribus unum," "One out of many." What does it mean?

What you'll need

U.S. coins
Map of the world
Calendar
History log

What to do

1. Have your children look at U.S. coins for the expression "E pluribus unum", and translate it for them: "One out of many." Explain to them that it refers to America as *one* nation with *many* peoples and cultures, and that it is not a common nationality but shared democratic values that bind us as a nation.

2. With your children talk about the following list of holidays celebrated in the United States. Look at a calendar to add other holidays, and next to each holiday write when it is celebrated and what is celebrated.

New Year's Day	January 1	New beginning
Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday	January 15	Birth of a leader
Presidents' Day	3rd Monday of February	Originally, Presidents Lincoln and Washington; currently all former U.S. presidents

Memorial Day	Last Monday of May	War dead
Independence Day	July 4	National independence; adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776
Labor Day	First Monday of September	Working people
Columbus Day	Second Monday of October	Landing of Columbus in the Bahamas in 1492
Veterans Day	November 11	War veterans
Thanksgiving Day	Fourth Thursday of November	Giving thanks for divine goodness
Christmas Day	December 25	Birth of Jesus

3. Use the opportunity of talking about what holidays celebrate to read original sources. For example: on Presidents' Day read one of the great presidential speeches such as the *Gettysburg Address*; on Martin Luther King's Day read the "I Have a Dream" speech.

4. Find holidays celebrated in other nations. Classmates, neighbors, and relatives from other countries are good sources of information.

5. Think and talk about other important holidays our nation should celebrate.

6. Discuss what your family celebrates, and have your children write about the discussion in their history log.

What kinds of accomplishments or events do we celebrate in America? What similarities and differences did you find between American holidays and holidays celebrated by people from other countries?

The Past Anew

Reenactments of historical battles or periods, such as colonial times, make our nation's history come alive. And they get our children involved.

What you'll need

A library card
Local newspapers
Phone book
History log

What was unusual or interesting about the reenactment? What role did each of the reenactors play? If there was conflict, what was shown or said about its causes? What obstacles did the characters face? How did they overcome them? What is the difference between the "real thing" and a performance of it? What did you learn from the performance?

What to do

1. Find out where reenactments are held by looking in your local newspaper or calling your local historical society, State Park, or National Park Service.

2. Choose one, and prepare your child to see it by visiting a local museum or historical site that relates to the reenactment, or by watching a television program about the event or period to be reenacted. Use your local librarian and TV guide as resources.

3. Attend the reenactment and participate. Ask the reenactors questions about anything—from the kind of hat they are wearing to the meanings of the event or period for the development or transformation of America. Finally, help your child write about this experience in the history log.

Parents and the Schools

Educators and education policymakers at the national and state levels support an expanded history curriculum in our schools. Parents and schools can be partners in this endeavor as they work toward their common goal of educating children. Following are some well-proven measures for supporting your children's study of history at school, and for forming productive relationships with those responsible for their education away from home:

1. Become familiar with your school's history program. Ask yourself:

- What do I see in my child's classroom that shows history is valued there? For example, are maps, globes, atlases, and original source documents visible?
- Are newspapers and current events media part of the curriculum? Are biographies, myths, and legends used to study history?
- Does my child regularly have history homework, and history projects periodically, including debates and mock trials?
- Are there field trips relating to history?
- Is my child encouraged to ask questions and look for answers from reliable sources?
- How is knowledge of history assessed in addition to tests based on the textbook?
- Are my children learning history in elementary and middle school, and are the history curriculums well coordinated?
- Does the history curriculum include world history as well as American history?
- Does my school require teachers to have studied history? Or does it assign history classes to teachers with little or no background?

2. Talk often with your child's teachers.

- Attend parent-teacher conferences early in the school year.
- Listen to what teachers say during these conferences, and take notes.
- Let teachers know that you expect your child to gain a knowledge of history, and that you appreciate their efforts towards this goal.
- Ask the teachers what their expectations of the class and your child are.
- Agree on a system of communication with the teachers for the year, either by phone or in writing twice a semester, and whenever you are concerned.
- Keep an open mind in discussing your child's education with teachers; ask questions about anything you don't understand; and be frank with them about your concerns.

3. Help to improve history education in your child's school.

- Volunteer in your children's history class, for example, to organize visits from the mayor or local historians, and to local historical sites.
- If you feel dissatisfied with the history program, talk to your children's teachers first, and then to the principal, history curriculum division, superintendent, and finally the school board. Also talk to other parents for their input.

Resources

Listed below are a few of the many excellent books about people, events, and issues in American and world history that are available for primary and middle school children. They are available in most public and school libraries, as well as in children's bookstores. Suggestions came from: *The New York Times Parent's Guide to the Best Books for Children*, by Eden Ross Lipson; *History—Social Science Curriculum: A Booklet for Parents*, by the California Department of Education; *The Horn Book Guide to Children's and Young Adult Books*, by The Horn Book, Incorporated; *Children's Books in Print*; and from the 1991 bibliography of the National Council for the Social Studies—Children's Book Council. The listing includes author, title, and publisher.

Primary Level Books

1. American History and Culture

Adler, David A. A Picture Book of Eleanor Roosevelt. See also other titles in this series, and *Thomas Jefferson: Father of Our Democracy*, and *George Washington: Father of Our Country*. Holiday.

Barth, Edna. *Turkeys, Pilgrims and Indian Corn: The Story of the Thanksgiving Symbols*. Clarion.

Cherry, Lynne. *A River Ran Wild*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Cohen, Barbara. *Molly's Pilgrim*. Lothrop.

Faber, Doris. *Amish*. Doubleday.

Ferris, Jeri. *Go Free or Die: A Story about Harriet Tubman*. See also *Walking the Road to Freedom: A Story about Sojourner Truth*. Carolrhoda Books.

Fisher, Leonard E. *The Statue of Liberty*. Holiday.

Fritz, Jean. *Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?* See also *What's the Big Idea, Ben Franklin?*, and *Will You Sign Here, John Hancock?* Coward.

Gibbons, Gail. *From Path to Highway: The Story of the Boston Post Road*. T.Y.Crowell/HarperCollins.

Harness, Cheryl. *Three Young Pilgrims*. Bradbury Press.

Jakes, John. *Susanna of the Alamo: A True Story*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Lawson, Robert. *Watchwords of Liberty: A Pageant of American Quotations*. Little, Brown.

McGovern, Ann. *If You Lived in Colonial Times*. Scholastic.

McGuffy, William Holmes. *McGuffey's Third Eclectic Reader*. Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Monjo, F. N. *The One Bad Thing about Father* (biography of Theodore Roosevelt). See also *The Drinking Gourd*. Harper.

O'Kelley, Mattie Lou. *From the Hills of Georgia: An Autobiography in Paintings*. Little, Brown.

Provensen, Alice. *The Buck Stops Here: The Presidents of the United States*. HarperCollins.

Rynbach, Iris V. *Everything from a Nail to a Coffin*. Orchard.

Sewall, Marcia. *The Pilgrims of Plimoth*. See also *People of the Breaking Day* (same period from Indian point of view). Atheneum.

Von Tscharner, Renata, and Ronald Fleming. *New Providence: A Changing Cityscape*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Waters, Kate. *The Story of the White House*. Scholastic.

Williams, Sherley Anne. *Working Cotton*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

2. World History and Culture

Adler, David A. Our Golda: The Story of Golda Meir. Viking.

Aliki. *Mummies Made in Egypt*. T.Y. Crowell/HarperCollins.

Fisher, Leonard E. *The Great Wall of China*. See also *Pyramid of the Sun—Pyramid of the Moon*, and *The Wailing Wall*. Macmillan.

Musgrove, Margaret W. *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions*. Dial.

Provensen, Alice, and Martin Provensen. *The Glorious Flight: Across the Channel with Louis Blériot*. Puffin.

Sabin, Louis. *Marie Curie*. Troll.

Stanley, Diane. *Peter the Great*. Four Winds.

Wells, Ruth. *A to Zen: A Book of Japanese Culture*. Simon and Schuster.

3. Historical Fiction and Poetry

Aliki. A Medieval Feast. T.Y.Crowell/ HarperCollins.

Baylor, Byrd. *The Best Town in the World*. Scribner's.

Benchley, Nathaniel. *Sam the Minuteman*. HarperCollins.

Burton, Virginia Lee. *Little House*. Houghton Mifflin.

Goble, Paul. *Death of the Iron Horse*. Macmillan.

Hall, Donald. *Ox-Cart Man*. Puffin.

Kurelek, William. *A Prairie Boy's Winter*. Houghton Mifflin.

Kuskin, Karla. *Jerusalem, Shining Still*. Harper Trophy.

Lee, Jeanne M. *Ba-Nam*. Henry Holt.

Le Sueur, Meridel. *Little Brother of the Wilderness: The Story of Johnny Appleseed*. Holy Cow! Press.

Livingston, Myra. *Celebrations*. Holiday.

Lobel, Anita. *Potatoes, Potatoes*. HarperCollins.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *Hiawatha*. Dial.

Lyon, George–Ella. *Who Came Down That Road?* Franklin Watts.

Spier, Peter. *We the People: The Constitution of the U. S.*. See also *Tin Lizzie*, *New Amsterdam*, and *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Doubleday.

Swift, Hildegarde, and Lynd Ward. *Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Turkle, Brinton. *Thy Friend, Obadiah*. Puffin.

Zolotow, Charlotte. *The Sky Was Blue*. Harper.

Upper Elementary Level Books

1. American History and Culture

a. Original sources and biographies

The Log of Christopher Columbus' First Voyage to America: in the Year 1492, As Copied Out in Brief by Bartholomew Las Casas. Linnett Books/Shoestring Press.

Brown, Margaret W. (editor). *Homes in the Wilderness: A Pilgrim's Journal of Plymouth Plantation in 1620, by William Bradford and Others of the Mayflower Company*. Linnett Books/Shoestring Press.

Cousins, Margaret. *Ben Franklin of Old Philadelphia*. Random.

Douglass, Frederick. *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Macmillan. See also *The Narrative and Selected Writings*. Modern Library.

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Videos

An American Tail, Universal Studios. An animated fable about 19th century immigration, in color.

The Civil War, PBS, directed by Kenneth Burns. An 11 hour series in color and black and white.

Eyes on the Prize, PBS. A series on the civil rights movement in the United States.

References for Parents

Hirsch, E.D. Jr. *What Your First Grader Needs To Know*. See also titles on second-, third-, and fourth-graders. Doubleday/Core Knowledge Series.

Local and National Resources

Federal Government

General Services Administration, Publications Sales Branch, NEPS-G, Washington, DC 20408. Write for a list of available "documents from the past."

National Park Service, Office of Public Inquiries, Washington, DC 20013–7127. Write for maps and guides to national historic sites.

National Register of Historic Places, Interagency Resources Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013–7127. The Register's archives contain information on 59,000 places of national, state, and local significance.

National Nonprofit Organizations

American Association for State and Local History, 172 Second Avenue North, Suite 202, Nashville, TN 37201. The association maintains an extensive list of museums, historic sites, and historical societies.

National Council for History Education, 26915 Westwood Rd., Suite B-2, Westlake, Ohio 44145. Write to the council for the monthly newsletter, *History Matters!* The council also maintains a Speakers' Bureau.

National History Day, University of Maryland at College Park, 0121 Caroline Hall, College Park, MD 20742. Write for information on local, regional, state, and national contests for middle schoolers.

National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036. Write to them for lists of preservation groups in local communities throughout the United States. These groups often have walking maps and special historical programs.

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What We Can Do To Help Our Children Learn:

Listen to them and pay attention to their problems.

Read with them.

Tell family stories.

Limit their television watching.

Have books and other reading materials in the house.

Look up words in the dictionary with them.

Encourage them to use an encyclopedia.

Share favorite poems and songs with them.

Take them to the library—get them their own library cards.

Take them to museums and historical sites, when possible.

Discuss the daily news with them.

Go exploring with them and learn about plants, animals, and local geography.

Find a quiet place for them to study.

Review their homework.

Meet with their teachers.

Do you have other ideas?

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